

exhibits



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
THE GENERAL COURT
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

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February 5, 1999

Dr. John Silber
Chairman
Massachusetts Board of Education
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148 - 5023

Dear Dr. Silber:

Enclosed please find a copy of a letter dated January 20, 1999 stating the timetable for the introduction of the *Massachusetts Guide to Choosing and Using Curricular Materials on Genocide and Human Rights Issues*. Based on this information it was my understanding that we would have until February 9th to present comments and suggestions to the Department of Education.

Therefore, you can understand my surprise when the Board of Education voted on the adoption of these materials at their January 26, 1999 meeting. While I am pleased with the overall document, I would like to offer some comments.

I would like to suggest the reintroduction of Appendices D and E. These two appendices offer an important frame of reference for both teachers and students when teaching and studying these events. Although some editing of appendices D and E might be appropriate, I feel that their removal severely diminishes the overall effectiveness of this guide.

Voting on this measure before the stated deadline sets a dangerous precedent in limiting public debate and participation. It is my hope that the board will continue to consider public input until the original February 9th date.

Thank you for your time and attention on these matters. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Steven A. Tolman
Steven A. Tolman
State Senator

CC: David Driscoll
Susan Wheltle

SAT/mci

Date: Fri, 5 Feb 1999 16:52:03 -0500
From: "Wheitle, Susan Y" <SWheitle@doe.mass.edu>
To: "jmc@louisville.edu" <jmc@louisville.edu>
Cc: "tacs@world.std.com" <tacs@world.std.com>,
"Thomson, Carole S" <CThomson@doe.mass.edu>
Subject: Massachusetts Curriculum Guide for Human Rights

Dear Dr. McCarthy,

The Massachusetts Department of Education is compiling a guide to teaching about genocide and human rights issues in PreK-12 schools. Erkut Gomulu, President of the Turkish American Cultural Society of New England, suggested that I contact you for suggestions of works to include in a bibliography of print materials for general readers, such as high school teachers and their students; believe he has spoken with you about this project.

Mr. Gomulu and I are meeting on February 9, and he has indicated he will bring some materials with him. Our deadline for completing the Guide is February 24. We will be grateful for your guidance.

Susan Wheitle
Instruction and Curriculum Services
Massachusetts Department of Education
350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148
781-388-3300 x 239
swheitle@doe.mass.edu



The Turkish American Cultural Society of New England, Inc.

Post Office Box 1308
Boston MA 02104-1308

a non-profit, tax exempt, charitable organization

E-mail: tacs@world.std.com

Web Site: <http://world.std.com/~tacs/>

February 8, 1999

Susan Wheltle
Instruction and Curriculum Services
Massachusetts Department of Education
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148

Re.: Our letter to Dr. David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education, and
Members of the Board of Education dated January 19, 1999
Commissioner Driscoll's reply dated January 27, 1999
Our e-mail correspondence

Dear Ms. Wheltle,

We would like to thank you for including us in the curriculum resource development process regarding Chapter 276 of the Acts of 1998. However, we must register our deep dismay that the claim of genocide was accepted in the framework as undisputed and factual, thus creating a biased environment reflected in the draft Guidelines.

We kindly ask the following comments to be considered when you revise the Guidelines, and we respectfully submit our input for the related resource sections:

- I. Using the term "Armenian Genocide" in the Guidelines
- II. Choice of References
 - A) Printed Reference Material
 - B) Resources for Teaching About Genocide and Human Rights Issues and National and International Organizations
 - C) Web Sites
- III. Effects of the Guidelines on Creation of a Negative Atmosphere in the Classroom
- IV. Effect of the Guidelines on Critical Thinking

I. Using the term "Armenian Genocide" in the Guidelines:

We are particularly concerned with the way the Armenian question is portrayed in the Guidelines. Using the term "Armenian Genocide" on page 4 and later using the term "Armenian Genocides" on page 13 in the Guidelines represent the controversial subject as if there were academic consensus on the issue. We recommend using the term "Armenian Question" instead of the term "Armenian Genocide" in the Guidelines. Using the term "Armenian Genocide," instead of "Armenian Question," relates just one version of the events, the Armenian side, and this can not be considered as objective or impartial. Millions of dead muslims are not mentioned whereas hundreds of thousands of dead Armenians are. Is this not the sort of bias the curriculum is designed to combat?

II. Choice of References:

The selections on "Print Resources", "Resources for Teaching About Genocide and Human Rights Issues", "National and International Organizations", and Web Sites related to the Armenian Question in the Guidelines conflict with the principles of the Guidelines, since they represent only the Armenian side of the story.

A) Choice of Printed Reference Material:

The choice of print materials on page 27 does not follow the guiding principles with respect to the Armenian Question, since all of the printed resources mentioned in the draft are related to an Armenian source (author or publisher).

Guiding Principles state that,

"Through a balanced study of history's repeated incidents of human rights violations, " (Guiding Principle 4), " should be taught to examine these complex issues using a variety of critical lenses and methods." (Guiding Principle 5), " human rights issues are taught within logical historical sequence, rather than as isolated events." (Guiding Principle 6), and

Strands and Learning Standards state that,

"Students will understand the chronological order of historical events and recognize the complexity of historical cause and effect, including the interaction of forces from different spheres of human activity, " (page 15)

Reasoning, Reflection, Research and Content in History and Social Sciences also state that,

"They (students) must learn how to test and frame hypotheses, to distinguish logical from illogical reasoning, and to grasp the superiority of reflective thinking

and evaluation over the impulsive and uninformed rush to judgment and decision."(page 19)

"Teachers ought to give sustained, consistent attention to distinctions among the following:

knowledge (judgment verified, proven, demonstrated, or confirmed by evidence);
informed opinion (judgment supported by evidence);
uninformed or mere opinion (belief without evidence);
bias and prejudice (belief in spite of contravening evidence);
scapegoating and stereotyping (prejudice based on radical and unfair oversimplification);
open mindedness (receptiveness to new evidence);
narrow mindedness (receptiveness only to evidence in favor of one's opinions, special pleading); and
closed mindedness (unwillingness to seek, heed, or listen to evidence)."
(page 19)

Guiding Principle 3 states that "An effective English language arts curriculum draws on literature from many genres, time periods, and cultures, ", but later it delivers a list of recommended authors which includes only an Armenian author, telling just one side of the story. These contradict with the impartiality or objectivity principles of the Guidelines since it does not give the opportunity to the other side to be heard.

B) *Resources for Teaching About Genocide and Human Rights Issues and National and International Organizations:*

On these pages only organizations reflecting the Armenian perspective are included. However, Scope, Sequence and Developmental Considerations: The High School Grades, 9-12, states that,

"Older high school students can engage in meaningful study and discussion of topics such as genocide and human rights violations. Caution should be used in choosing materials, and in the methods employed in teaching with these materials, at all grade levels. The nature of these topics brings with it the possibility of misunderstanding or cynicism." (page 8),

and later it follows that,

"Teachers and students alike benefit from the assistance and expertise of individuals and organizations skilled and experienced in the access and delivery of this difficult material. A list of such organizations begins on page 23." (page 8)

While the Armenian Question is still controversial among historians, the resource list for teaching genocide and human rights issues includes only Armenian sources. This also clearly contradicts the principles of the Guidelines mentioned above.

C) Web Sites:

In the Guidelines, "Choosing Instructional Materials and Programs on Genocide and Human Rights Issues", it is stated that,

"Nonfiction literature, documentaries, and informational materials related to genocide and human rights issues should provide:

- Coherent arguments and differing points of view on controversial issues;
- Explanatory text that is free of racial, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and gender bias;"(page 21)

Yet the web site of the Armenian National Institute specified among the sources announces that it is "Dedicated to the study, research, and affirmation of Armenian Genocide". Not surprisingly, any information against the "affirmation of genocide" is excluded. By excluding the information against the "affirmation of genocide", this source serves as propaganda of an ethnically biased history. Referring to this web site in the resources section contradicts the warning that "Students need to have tools to analyze the validity of sources they find on the Net, particularly when they research controversial issues" (page 22)

To comply with the principles of the Guidelines and in order to create objective and impartial Guidelines, these sources should be accompanied by resources providing other points of view on this issue.

III. Effects of the Guidelines on Creation of a Negative Atmosphere in the Classroom:

If one-sided materials will be taught in ethnically diverse classrooms, children of Turkish ancestry will be subjected to unjustified psychological and social pressure and a feeling of undeserved guilt. Surely this in no way could be deemed good pedagogy. It is also not fair for the vast majority of students with non-Turkish ancestry who would be misinformed prejudicially, and this may undermine the peaceful interaction which you would expect to find in the classroom.

Supporting our point of view, Guiding Principle 4 states that,

"An effective history and social science curriculum recognizes each person as an individual, encourages respect for the human and civil rights of all people, and also emphasizes students' shared heritage as citizens, residents, and future citizens of the United States."

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Also in the Guiding Principle 10 it states that,

"Taking advantage of this diversity, teachers carefully choose literature and guide discussions about the variety of peoples around the world and their different beliefs, stories and traditions. At the same time, they help students discover common ground in humanitarian issues."

IV. Effect of the Guidelines on Critical Thinking:

There is reasonable doubt regarding the Armenian claims of a deliberate and systematic annihilation. Therefore, this necessitates critical evaluation of the question and contemplation of alternative viewpoints.

"Reasoning, Reflection, Research and Content in History and Social Sciences" of the Guidelines supports our perspective stating that,

"Good teachers explain such distinctions explicitly, as developmentally appropriate, but they illuminate them also by concentrating on the specific "how to" knowledge students need in order to understand subject matter content:

- how to understand and distinguish cause, effect, sequence, and correlation; long term and short-term causal relations; and limitations on determining causes and effect;
- how to gather, interpret, and assess evidence from multiple and sometimes conflicting sources ;
- how to distinguish knowledge from various forms of opinion; how to minimize avoidable error; how to identify valid and fallacious arguments; how to test hypotheses; how to identify and avoid bias and prejudice; how and how not to compare present and past and infer lessons from the past; how to distinguish sound generalizations from false oversimplifications; " (page 19)

"Selected Strands and Learning Standards" state that,

"Students will interpret the meaning of literary works, non-fiction, films, and media by using different critical lenses and analytic techniques." (page 20)

In the "Choosing Instructional Materials and Programs on Genocide and Human Rights Issues" it is stated that,

"Historically accurate and complete information based on primary sources" should be used. Also, according to the same section, support and background materials for teachers should provide "An emphasis on critical thinking about

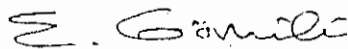
historical sources and events;" and "A bibliography of primary sources, materials, and resources." (page 21)

Critical thinking and the ability to examine all sides of controversial issues are vital to responsible citizenship. Since the objective study of history has the power to aid in understanding complex human relationships in the public affairs arena, it is vitally important that the Armenian Question be studied impartially. Such encompassing impartial study should include careful examination of all perspectives and issues involved in the Armenian Question.

In this context, we are offering printed materials to be included in the "Selected Print Resources for Teachers and High School Students", as well as names of the organizations and web sites to be included in the "Resources for Teaching about Genocide and Human Rights Issues", "National and International Organizations" and "Additional Web Sites" sections to create objective and impartial Guidelines and Teaching Materials on this controversial issue. Enclosed please find our list of the resources related to this matter.

Thank you for your kind cooperation on this important subject.

Sincerely,



Erkut Gömülü, President
The Turkish American Cultural Society of New England

Address: The Turkish American Cultural Society of New England, Inc.
P.O. Box 1308
Boston, MA 02104-1308
E-mail: tacs@world.std.com

cc: Dr. David P. Driscoll, Interim Commissioner
Dr. John Silber, Chairman, Massachusetts Board of Education
Carole S. Thomson, Associate Commissioner
Members of the Massachusetts Board of Education

Encl.

REFERENCES:

I) Print Resources:

Armenian Atrocities and Terrorism: Testimonies of Witnesses. ATAA, Washington, 1997.

Armenian Claims and Historical Facts. Center for Strategic Research, Ankara, 1998.

Gürün, Kamuran. *The Armenian File.* London, 1985

Lewis, Bernard. *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years.* Scribner: 1995.

McCarthy, Justin. *Death and Exile.* Princeton, New Jersey, 1995.

McCarthy, Justin. *The Ottoman Turks: An Introductory History to 1923.* Longman: Singapore, 1997.

McCarthy, Justin and Carolyn McCarthy. *Turks and Armenians.* ATAA, Washington, 1989.

Öke, Mim Kemal. *The Armenian Question.* 1988.

Orel, Sinasi and Süreyya Yuca. *The Talat Pasha Telegrams: Historical Fact or Armenian Fiction?* 1983

Sonyel, Salahi. *The Ottoman Armenians.* London, 1987.

II) Web Sites:

<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupf/default.asp?Param=/grupf/Armenian.htm>

http://www.turkey.org/politics/p_armn00.htm

<http://www.ataa.org/ataa/action/armenian.html>

III) Organizations:

Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA)
Curriculum Committee for History and Social Sciences (CCHSS)
1601 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
Suite 303
Washington, D.C. 20009
Tel: (202) 483-9090
Fax: (202) 483-9092
<http://www.ataa.org>

Institute of Turkish Studies
Intercultural Center – Box 571033
Georgetown University
Washington, DC 20057-1033
Tel: (202) 687-0295
Fax: (202) 687-3780
<http://www.turkishstudies.org>

Turkish American Cultural Society of New England
P.O. Box 1308
Boston, MA 02104
E-mail: tacs@world.std.com
<http://world.std.com/~tacs/>

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Date: Fri, 19 Feb 1999 17:35:07 -0500
From: "Wheltle, Susan Y" <SWheltle@doe.mass.edu>
To: "tacs@world.std.com" <tacs@world.std.com>
Cc: "Thomson, Carole S" <CThomson@doe.mass.edu>
Subject: RE: Curriculum

Dear Mr. Gomulu,

Thank you for all the materials you have lent to us. I have read them, and I have spoken with Justin McCarthy; they have helped me understand this difficult period in history for better than I did before. I will return the books to you shortly.

We plan to include the organizations and websites you have suggested in the Guide, so that teachers and high school students will have access to the many bibliographies and other resources on history and current events they offer.

I have discussed the recommendations you have made for revising the language in the framework with several of the people who were involved in writing it. While the history and social science framework simply cannot be changed immediately, it, like all the rest, will undergo a review process, most probably 2 years from now.

As I indicated when you visited on February 9, the Board will not be discussing the Guide or the framework at its upcoming meeting. However, I will make sure that you get a copy when it is completed.

Susan Wheltle
Instruction and Curriculum Services
Massachusetts Department of Education
350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148
781-388-3300 x 239
swheltle@doe.mass.edu

